

11 May 2021

Agenda Item No. 7

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## Directorate Improvement Plan – Priorities 2021-23

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**Report by:** Carrie Lindsay, Executive Director, Education & Children's Services

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**Wards Affected:** All wards

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### Purpose

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The purpose of this report is to outline the draft improvement priorities for the Education & Children's Services Directorate Plan 2021-23 and to explain the rationale for these priorities. Comments are invited on these draft priorities.

### Recommendation(s)

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The Committee is asked to consider the ECS Directorate's draft improvement priorities for 2021-23 and to comment as appropriate.

### Resource Implications

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The paper outlines the Directorate's focus for improvement, to ensure that outcomes for children and young people in Fife improve as the Directorate works to support recovery from the Covid pandemic within its current budget.

### Legal & Risk Implications

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The priorities identified in para. 3.4 have been identified as a suitable basis to support the Directorate's approach to improvement for 2021-23. They will enable the Directorate to publish an Improvement Plan that will meet a range of requirements, arising from legislation and national policy. Failure to identify suitable priorities for improvement would result in a failure to meet these statutory and policy requirements.

### Impact Assessment

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The Directorate Plan highlights the Directorate's key priorities for improvement over the coming year. These have been chosen to help achieve to improved outcomes for all children and young people, but will have a particular focus on: closing the attainment gap for children living in socially disadvantaged areas; improving life chances and opportunities for Fife's most vulnerable children and young people (including looked after children and the care experienced).

### Consultation

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The development of the Education & Children's Services (ECS) Directorate improvement priorities for 2021-23 has been informed by a range of consultation and engagement activities with staff and by feedback from children, young people and families. This process of consultation is ongoing, and members of the Education & Children's Services Sub-Committee are invited to comment on the current draft priorities, as part of this consultation process.

## 1.0 Background

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- 1.1 The Education & Children's Services (ECS) Directorate is subject to a range of requirements to develop and publish strategic plans for its services, arising from both legislation and national policy. The Directorate meets many of these demands through its Directorate Improvement Plan, ensuring that the Directorate's services for children, young people and families are aligned with one another.
- 1.2 The Education & Children's Services (ECS) Directorate Improvement Plan covers a 3-year planning period, which is aligned to the statutory planning period for children's services. The current planning period is 2020-23, however, during 2020-21 both the ECS Directorate and Children's Services Partnership published a single-year plan. These were produced in line with national guidance, and were designed to support the work of children's services during the initial stages of the Covid pandemic.
- 1.3 Both the ECS Directorate and Fife Children's Services Partnership are currently developing Improvement Plans for 2021-23, to cover the remaining part of the statutory planning period for children's services. This paper provides an overview of the draft improvement priorities that the Directorate has identified, and the rationale for their choice.

## 2.0 Overview of the Directorate's current performance

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- 2.1 Appendix 1 of the paper provides a summary overview of current evidence about the experiences and outcomes of children, young people and families in Fife. This evidence is taken from a multi-agency review, which has been undertaken as part of the work to develop the Fife Children's Services Plan 2021-23.
- 2.2 Most of the outcomes in appendix 1 have been reported to the Education & Children's Services Sub-Committee during the past year. The remainder will be published in the Annual Report on Children's Services 2020/21, which is expected to be published in June.
- 2.3 A number of broad themes are evident in the evidence about improvement in Fife during the period before the Covid pandemic:
  - The level of child poverty is increasing across Scotland. However, there is evidence that poverty in Fife is increasing at a faster rate. Fife now reports the 5th highest level of child poverty among Scotland's 32 authorities.
  - Overall, average outcomes in Fife were similar to those for Scotland, although persistently below national outcomes for some measures (e.g. attainment at National 5). For many measures where Fife was performing below national, Fife's performance was in line with outcomes for similar areas in Scotland, allowing for levels of child poverty in Fife. This is true for many measures of school leaver attainment, (e.g. the complementary tariff points of school leavers are similar to those of Fife's "virtual comparator" – a benchmark that reflects levels of deprivation and stage of leaving, etc).
  - Outcomes for the vulnerable and most disadvantaged (including the care experienced and those facing multiple forms of disadvantage – e.g. those living in SIMD Quintile 1, and/or being registered for free school meals, and/or having an additional support need) were significantly lower than those for the "average" child. Equity remains a significant challenge for Fife, as for Scotland and many other nations.

- Outcomes were improving and significant progress had been made in closing the equity gap across a range of key measures (including literacy and numeracy skills, positive destinations and participation post-school). However, the rate of improvement had been slowing in recent years.
- Significant progress has been made in supporting more children & young people who had a social work involvement at home, or within Fife. However, it is clear that a more child-centred and preventative approach is needed, involving a collective response across the partnership. This was also recognised in the findings of the Independent Care Review, and reflects the focus of “The Promise”.

2.4 A number of broad themes are also evident from the evidence to date regarding the impact of the Covid pandemic:

- Many outcomes have seen a set back, falling to levels last seen 3 or 4 years ago.
- Across a number of key outcomes equity gaps have widened again.
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing are a significant cause for concern.
- Engagement with children, young people and families has been a significant challenge during the pandemic.
- Nationally, unemployment is expected to rise in the next 10 months to between 7.5% and 10%.
- Child poverty levels are projected to rise further in the coming years.

2.5 Appendix 2 provides a summary overview of performance and process indicators for children’s services, as reported in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF), as published by the Improvement Service. Data is presented for the most recent two years, where currently published.

2.6 The key messages evident about outcomes in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework broadly reflect those summarised in appendix 1, albeit that the LGBF uses a narrower range of measures. It may be noted that:

- The quality of early years provision is good, compared with national inspection outcomes.
- Educational outcomes and experiences for looked after children are similar to, or better than, those seen in other parts of Scotland.
- Attainment for literacy and numeracy in primary schools is slightly better than national and somewhat above expectations (based on levels of child poverty in Fife and recognising the influence of social context on attainment).
- The attainment of Fife’s higher attaining pupils is generally lower than national but broadly in line with expectations (based on levels of child poverty in Fife and recognising the influence of social context on attainment).
- Levels of school attendance and exclusion are similar to those seen in other parts of Scotland.
- The proportion of school leavers entering a positive destination from school, and the proportion of young people aged 16-19 years old participating in education, training or employment, are similar to the Scottish average.

2.7 Indicators for children and families social work within the Local Government Benchmarking Framework have yet to be updated for last year’s data. They reflect some of the challenges that the service has been addressing through its Belonging 2 Fife strategy. However, they do not reflect the progress that has been made in reducing the use of residential placements, and in supporting more looked after children safely at home, over the past 2 years.

2.8 Appendix 3 provides a overview of key facts relating to the Directorate's resources, for information. This includes LGBF cost measures and workforce profile data.

### 3.0 The Directorate's Draft Priorities for 2021-23

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3.1 As part of the process for developing a new Children's Services Plan for Fife, professionals from across the children's services partnership have met in recent months to review a wide range of evidence about outcomes for children and young people in Fife. This has included pre-Covid improvement and evidence about the impact of Covid to date. This review process has highlighted the importance of a number of factors for the coming period of recovery:

- There is significant capacity to achieve improvement within the Directorate, supported by a culture of professional learning and development amongst staff and increasing experience in the use of improvement methodologies.
- It will be important in developing our approaches to support improvement during recovery to have a more targeted focus on those who are most disadvantaged.
- Nurturing approaches and trauma-informed practice have already begun to be developed in Fife and have an important role to play in helping to recognise and meet individual needs.
- It will be important to support the emotional wellbeing of our young people, families & staff.
- Valuing choice and participation, allowing young people a greater voice.
- Mitigating the impact of poverty.

3.2 Many of these factors have also been identified as important requirements for successful recovery by national reviews and research into the impact of the Covid pandemic (see: Scottish Government, October 2020).

3.3 The Directorate's priorities:

- Have been developed to address the key challenges highlighted in the evidence outlined in section 2.
- Will help to support a focus on the factors identified as important for successful recovery from Covid, as summarised in para. 3.1.
- Align with and support major national policy priorities, including: The Promise, and the National Improvement Framework for Schools.
- Align with and will ensure delivery of the Council recovery and reform areas for which the Directorate provides a lead (The Promise, attainment, and employability), or to which the Directorate contributes (including Tackling Poverty and Crisis Prevention).

3.4 The draft Directorate improvement priorities for 2021-23 are:

- **Delivering the Promise.** Working with the wider children's services partnership to develop a more collaborative approach to prevention for vulnerable children, including those on the edge of care.
- **Closing the Attainment Gap.** Building on existing experience in the use of the Model for Improvement to ensure that attainment recovers and further improves, and that the attainment gap closes significantly.
- **Improving Opportunity.** Ensuring that the achievement, attainment and employability skills of young people improve, particularly for the vulnerable and multiply disadvantaged.

- **Supporting Wellbeing.** Working to support the mental and physical health of children, young people and families, and of staff.
- **Empowering all.** Further developing leadership at all levels within the Directorate, to ensure that the Directorate's capacity for further improvement continues to grow during recovery.

3.5 The Directorate Plan priorities have been developed in parallel with and closely align with the draft improvement priorities identified for:

- The **Fife Children's Services Plan 2021-23**, the priorities being: Delivering the Promise; Closing the Equity Gap; Supporting Wellbeing; Respecting & Protecting Children's Rights. These have a particular focus on the working and responsibilities of the wider children's services partnership.
- The **South East Improvement Collaborative Improvement Plan** for schools, the priorities being: Drive High Quality Learning, Teaching & Assessment; Support Inclusion Wellbeing & Equity; Develop the Use of Digital Pedagogy. These are focused on the key enablers for closing the attainment gap and improving opportunities for learners during recovery.

## 4.0 Conclusions

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4.1 The priorities outlined in para. 3.4 have been developed through a process of ongoing engagement and consultation with children, young people and staff.

4.2 The committee is asked for any comments that it may have on the Directorate's draft priorities, as part of this ongoing consultation.

### List of Appendices

1. Education & Children's Services Directorate Overview of Performance 2020-21
2. Overview of Local Government Benchmarking Framework indicators for children's services in Fife
3. Overview of key facts relating to Directorate resources

### Background Papers

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1973:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19): impact on children, young people and families - evidence summary October 2020 (published by the Scottish Government, November 2020). Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/report-covid-19-children-young-people-families-october-2020-evidence-summary/>

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## Appendix 1

# Education & Children's Services Directorate Overview of Performance 2020-21

## Key messages

The table below summarises the outcomes reported to committee over the past year.



Priority Area	Pre-COVID Improvement Journey	Impact of COVID
<b>Safety</b>	<p>The proportion of children looked after by the local authority has been lower in Fife than in Scotland for a number of years.</p> <p>As a result of the Belonging 2 Fife strategy, there has been a shift in the profile of care in the past 2 years with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reduction in the proportion of looked after children in residential placements.</li> <li>• A reduction in the number of looked after children in purchased foster care placements.</li> <li>• An increase in the number of looked after children who are being supported safely at home, or in a kinship placement.</li> </ul> <p>However, the proportion of children being looked after in a purchased foster care placement continues to be above the national average.</p>	<p>The shift in the profile of care towards children being supported safely at home has continued, during the course of the pandemic.</p> <p>A programme of work, using the 4DX improvement methodology and involving the wider children's services partnership, has begun. This is looking to develop a better coordinated partnership approach to prevention for vulnerable children and young people, including those on the edge of care.</p>
<b>Wellbeing</b>	<p>Emotional wellbeing was identified as an area of concern before the pandemic, through a range of surveys and engagement events with young people.</p> <p>A partnership approach (Our Minds Matter) had been developed to ensure that young people were better supported with their mental health. The initial stages of this approach had been deployed, including multi-agency training, and improved transition pathways to access support.</p>	<p>Plans to introduce a Fife's Community Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework were initially delayed by the pandemic but are now being progressed.</p> <p>Surveys of parents have indicated a high level of positive feedback regarding the support given to children and families by the Directorate. However, there is a range of evidence that the Covid pandemic has added to existing stresses for young people, families and staff.</p> <p>A range of local and national surveys have also identified that mental health and resilience are key issues of concern to young people.</p>
<b>Opportunity</b>	<p>Prior to 2019/20 there had been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sustained increase in participation of 16-19-year olds in</li> </ul>	<p>During 2019/20:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proportion of school leavers entering positive</li> </ul>

Priority Area	Pre-COVID Improvement Journey	Impact of COVID
	<p>education, training or education. Fife also substantially closed the gap with national levels of participation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An improvement in the proportion of school leavers entering positive destinations, both nationally and in Fife. By 2019/20 Fife had significantly closed the gap in outcomes with national.</li> <li>• An improvement in school leaver attainment for literacy and numeracy and a closing of the attainment gap.</li> <li>• An improvement in achievement of CfE levels in primary schools for literacy and numeracy and a closing of the attainment gap.</li> </ul>	<p>destinations declined in both and Scotland. The gap with national widened.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Certification Process for SQA awards at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher was replaced with an alternative method of certification. This means that school leaver attainment for 2019/20 is not comparable with earlier years.</li> <li>• Although data on achievement of CfE levels was not collected nationally in 2019/20, there is evidence that levels of achievement had declined in Fife and that the attainment gap had widened.</li> </ul> <p>N.B. Published data on participation pre-dates the Covid pandemic.</p>
<b>Poverty</b>	<p>Levels of child poverty have been increasing across Scotland in recent years. There is evidence that levels of child poverty have been increasing at a faster rate than national. Fife now ranks as having the 5<sup>th</sup> highest rate of child poverty by the standard national measure of local poverty.</p>	<p>The Covid pandemic has had a negative impact on economic activity and levels of child poverty are projected to increase yet further. Unemployment levels are also projected to increase – potentially towards 10% – in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic.</p>
<b>Enablers</b>	<p>Quality indicators for children’s services before the pandemic had shown that the Directorate’s provision was generally well rated by national inspection agencies, including early years settings, schools, and care settings.</p> <p>The Directorate and wider children’s services partnership were evaluated as having the capacity for further improvement.</p>	<p>The regular schedule of service inspections has been interrupted by the pandemic.</p>



## Appendix 2 – Overview of Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) performance and process indicators

LGBF Indicator	Indicator Name	Fife 2018-19	Scotland 2018-19	Fife rank 2018-19	Fife 2019-20	Scotland 2019-20	Fife rank 2019-20	
CHN18	% of funded early years provision which is graded good/better	93.8	90.6	14	97.5	90.2	6	Performance
CHN20b	School exclusion rates (per 1,000 'looked after children')	112.3	152.2	9	dna	dna	dna	above or
CHN13a	% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils achieving expected CFE Level: Literacy	74.2	72.3	11	dna	dna	dna	similar to the
CHN13b	% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils achieving expected CFE Level: Numeracy	80.2	79.1	11	dna	dna	dna	Scottish
CHN20a	School exclusion rates (per 1,000 pupils)	19.3	21.6	15	dna	dna	dna	average
CHN23	% LAC with more than 1 placement in the last year (Aug-July)	20.9	19.7	16	dna	dna	dna	
CHN14b	Numeracy Attainment Gap (P1,4,7) - percentage point gap	16.5	16.8	19	dna	dna	dna	
CHN17	% of children meeting developmental milestones	84.6	85.5	19	dna	dna	dna	
CHN21	Participation rate for 16-19 year olds (per 100)	90.7	91.6	23	91.7	92.1	22	
CHN11	Proportion of Pupils Entering Positive Destinations	94.4	95.0	23	dna	dna	dna	
CHN19b	School attendance rate (Looked After Children)	85.7	86.8	23	dna	dna	dna	
CHN19a	School attendance rate	92.6	93.0	25	dna	dna	dna	
CHN7	% of Pupils from Deprived Areas Gaining 5+ Awards at Level 6	13	19	20	15	21	20	Performance
CHN12b	Average Total Tariff SIMD quintile 1	556	628	21	544	649	21	lower than the
CHN6	% of Pupils from Deprived Areas Gaining 5+ Awards at Level 5	36	45	21	38	47	22	Scottish
CHN12a	Overall Average Total Tariff	831.72	895.01	20	828.69	929.18	22	average
CHN9	% of children being looked after in the community	85.7	89.9	23	dna	dna	dna	but broadly
CHN5	% of Pupils Gaining 5+ Awards at Level 6	30	35	24	31	38	25	in line with
CHN14a	Literacy Attainment Gap (P1,4,7) - percentage point gap	18.5	20.7	25	dna	dna	dna	expectations
CHN4	% of Pupils Gaining 5+ Awards at Level 5	57	63	27	58	64	27	based on
CHN22	% of child protection re-registrations within 18 months	10.4	7.2	29	dna	dna	dna	poverty levels

**Notes.** Comments on performance relative to Scotland reflect the scale of difference in the level of performance, as well as ranking position. Some indicators are not available for 2019/20, either because national data was not collected in 2019/20 (e.g. CfE achievement, attendance) or because data for 2019/20 is available at a date later than publication on the LGBF (e.g. data for children and families social work).

## Appendix 3 – Overview of key facts relating to Directorate resources

### Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) cost indicators

LGBF Indicator	Indicator Name	Fife 2018-19	Scotland 2018-19	Fife rank 2018-19	Fife 2019-20	Scotland 2019-20	Fife rank 2019-20
CHN1	Cost Per Primary School Pupil	£4,969	£5,372	6	£5,180	£5,595	7
CHN2	Cost per Secondary School Pupil	£6,590	£7,337	2	£6,641	£7,531	1
CHN3	Cost per Pre-School Education Registration	£4,696	£5,141	12	£5,602	£6,783	8
CHN8a	Gross Cost of LAC in Residential Based Services per Child per Week	£4,030	£4,026	14	dna	dna	dna
CHN8b	The Gross Cost of LAC in a Community Setting per Child per Week	£484	£357	29	dna	dna	dna

### Education and Children's Services Directorate Workforce Profile

Service	No of Employees (FTE) April 2018	No of Employees (FTE) April 2019	No of Employees (FTE) April 2020	Difference in FTE 2019-2020
ED CHILDREN & FAMILIES	363.80	405.52	418.91	13.39
ED CRIMINAL JUSTICE	138.48	155.99	152.16	-3.83
ED EDUCATION - ALL OTHER EMPLOYEES	0.00	2548.57	2465.55	-83.02
ED EDUCATION - TEACHERS	0.00	3540.29	3540.29	0.00
*Ed Childcare (2018 Category)	127.83	N/A	N/A	N/A
ED Education (2018 Category)	5901.21	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,531.32</b>	<b>6650</b>	<b>6,577</b>	<b>-73.09</b>